

THREADS  
OF  
ALASKAN  
GOLD



A. M. H. T.

PRICE 60 CENTS.

2/55

*Threads.....*

*of*

*Alaskan Gold*

*by*

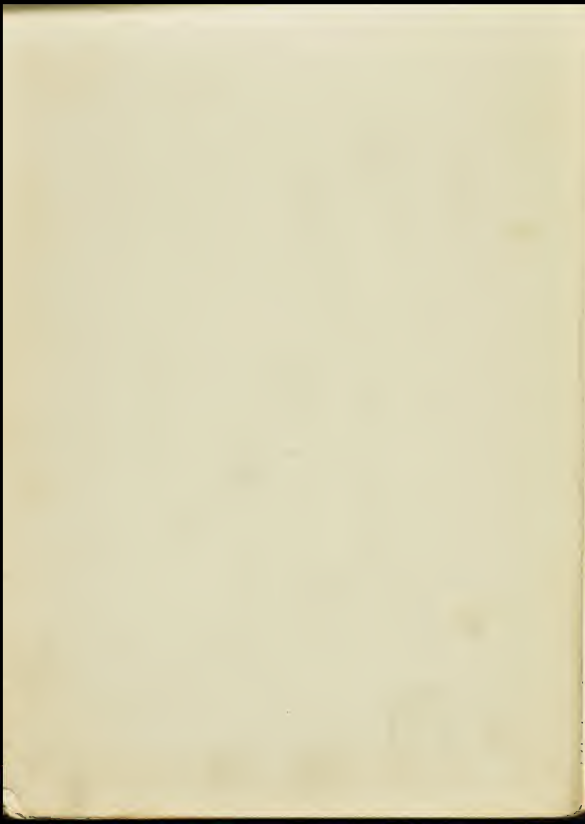
*Sarah Fell.*



[ONAH A. Nov. 1909]



*Sarah Fell.*



**COPYRIGHTED 1904**

**BY**

**SARAH FELL.**

# Preface.

*In response to the urgent requests of many friends to whom I have related fragmentary accounts of my experiences in Alaska, I have published this simple record of my Journey in the land of ice-bound streams and snow covered mountains in whose bosom lies securely locked that most precious of all metals... "Gold."*

On the 16th day of August, 1896, George Washington Carmack, a native of California, and a miner by profession, while on a prospecting tour in the far north, caught the glint of a yellow, shining metal in the black sand that abounds on the banks of the Klondike, and in a twinkling the whole world was electrified with that magical word, "Gold."

Instantly the land of ice-locked streams and snow-capped mountains, the clime where the winter knows no sun and the summer midnight has no twilight, was the center of all eyes, no matter that the soldiers were clanking their way to the south and the war clouds were gathering as thick and fast as vultures about their prey, the magic word that had leaped the length and breadth of the land like wildfire, blinded our eyes to all else and we set our faces to the frozen North instead of the sunny South. Fabulous tales of a fortune made in a day. Stories that would make the wonderful tale of King Midas look cheap and tawdry floated to the States and set the nation's pulse at fever heat; the trend of the empire was turning northward ho!! I was living in the Dakotas, the land of sun-kissed hills and wind-swept prairies, when the yellow fever broke out: Debt, that most horrible of taskmasters, had me in its grasp when the story of a woman who enriched her coffers by picking gold beads that trembled at the roots of grass like the shimmering dew on its blades, I too contracted the disease and joined in the march to the New Eldorado. I arrived in Seattle, that open "sesame" to the gold fields, in the spring of '97. On learning there was a scarcity of provisions in the Dawson district, I at once made up my mind to take in a year's supply and had everything placed in sacks of not more than twenty-five pounds each; twenty sacks of flour, eight of oatmeal, two of rice, four of beans, one hundred pounds of bacon, together with candles, matches, baking powder, soap, a small supply of canned goods, pick shovel, gold pan, frying pan, clothes and bed, and a sled I had made in two sections, each section being four feet long, sixteen inches wide, seven inches high, with brass runners. When everything was in readiness the huge steamer was about to swing from the gang plank with its motley load of passengers. Florence Marvin, a self-styled "prophetess," screamed wildly from

Spring 7  
'97  
Seattle



the beach: "This boat will go down exactly at 8 o'clock Thursday night and all on board will perish." I regret to record that more than twenty men, the sex that claims to be exempt from superstition, left the boat and lost their passage money. We made our first stop at Victoria, where we took on mails and received passengers for way points. We encountered a terrific storm at the entrance to Dixon's Channel on the day named in Florence Marvin's fatal prophecy; the wind whistled and howled like Demons let loose from hades; the sea was churned into a seething mass of foam-flecked waves and all was confusion on board: The pale and apprehensive passenger could be seen on every hand. After several futile attempts a successful anchorage was made and we spent the night on the sorm-tossed waves: The faithful Captain and his crew had brought us safely through and Florence Marvin proved a false prophetess. Our next stop was at Wrangell, a desolate, dreary Indian village where the Totem poles, cut garnets imbedded in mica slate, none of them being clear and all having seams that mar their beauty, proved the only interesting things we saw. The Indian women (Kloodchmens) sat in rows and groups, some in squatting posture face downward, as they tried to sell their silver bracelets, baskets, etc. To we Dakotans where the prairies fairly swarm with the noble red man on the government reservations, the sight was neither new nor interesting. Juneau was the last place one could get supplies for the gold fields, and near Douglass Island, where the largest stamp mills in the world were located. Treadwell mines strengthened our resolves and even the fog which enveloped us so heavily in its dreary pall, that we couldn't recognize our best friend at arm's length, failed to dampen our ardor. Great mountain peaks cut the sky on either side as keen as the edge of a knife blade; stern and white and formidable these silent sentinels seemed to frown down from their lofty heights at man's rude intrusion upon their grim solitude, undisturbed heretofore save by the babbling of the waterfalls that trickled down their huge sides: they looked in the distance like strands of silver ribbons. We arrived at length at Skagway, the port of entry to innumerable hardships and maybe death. I hauled my entire load myself; packing and unpacking,

Skagway

making many trips backward and forward. I can give you no conception of the magnitude of dangers on this rough pack trail; in some places we were compelled to snub our sleds, in others we had to unload and carry up steep places, one sack at a time, shifting it from one arm to the other, allowing us to get a better hold; then again the trail would be so narrow we could not pass each other; at these places I have seen whole sleds with their precious cargo go slipping down the mountain's side and even the sure-footed faithful beasts of burden have lost their footing and gone with a pitiful whinney to their death over the precipice. I have seen strong men in middle life sit down and cry as the loneliness and desolation of it all swept over their souls; women are more enduring than men and with equal hardships kept in better cheer. One of the saddest incidents that occurred during the seven weeks it took to cross this portage of over forty miles was the death of Mrs. Davis of typhoid fever, her faithful husband with whom she had started full of joy and hope, unloaded his eight foot sled, tenderly folded her lifeless body in blankets and fur robes; he could not bury her in the pitiless snow, he could not leave her there alone wrapped in her cold winding sheet with the desolate, death-haunted sentinels frowning down from above. Our hearts went out in sympathy to the poor hope-crushed man. It was many a long day before the camp resumed its customary tone. As we pushed laboriously on we met a dog team loaded with gold and heard the word "mush" for the first time it was taken from the Canadian French word "marche," meaning to go on. Right here I want to relate an incident which shows what a strong hold the vernacular of the country has on the miners: A couple of returned prospectors went into a restaurant in Seattle to get their breakfast, as soon as they were seated, a waitress came forward and said: "Mush, Gents?" With one accord they made a dive for their hats and left muttering as they went, they wondered why she had ordered them out and she in turn was amazed because they left so suddenly. We overheard a Yankee and an Englishman strike a bargain that struck us as exceedingly funny. The Englishman bought an ox of the Yankee to draw his sled, taking directions on paper, haw to the left, gee to the right and

7 weeks  
to cross  
over  
Sleazey  
portage  
40 miles

whoa was stop. These directions he folded carefully and placed in an inside pocket very pompously, as much as to say, "There I've a cinch on the whole business." The bidable creature did very well until he came to an air hole in the snow over a stream, when his master wanted him to turn to the right, haw whoa, by Jove, doncher know, and when the ox didn't pull out the Englishman only stood still, seemingly afraid or confused. Some one called out, "Mr. Obtuse, where's your directions," then he whipped out his paper and looked through his one eye glass a minute and said, "O-a, I beg your pahdon, gee, gee." Well, now, we did enjoy this, though we could not eat any part of the ox when it was butchered.

Yes, and a prim old maid who confessed to having "seen" thirty-five summers (we all concluded she had been blind twenty more summers) afforded considerable amusement on the trail. Her kittenish ways harmonized rather oddly with her wrinkled face and white hair. She was going to the Klondike with the avowed purpose of catching one of the millionaire kings; her captivating smirks, however, failed to make an impression on the armor of his majesty and she went back to the States a sadder but a wiser woman. Tired enough we reached lake Bennett, but in perfect health. The Yukon was still frozen and the roads were so fine we concluded to sled on down the river until we came to a suitable cove to build our boat; the last few miles the ice was rotten and more than once we came near losing our lives as well as our sleds. Every party had to build his own boat or raft, timber was plentiful and in most cases lumber was cut out with a whipsaw. Our boat was twenty-five feet long, calked with oakum and pitch, shaped like a skiff, and held four persons with their outfits, I being the only woman. Our helmsman at the steering oar was a man thirty years old and of medium weight, as he owned compass and maps felt his importance and thought his word should be respected. One oarsman was about the same age, red-headed, with weight about one hundred and twenty pounds and had been foreman over a number of men and was naturally conceited, a fact which did not suit the other oarsman; a young Dutchman, who weighed in the neighborhood of two hundred and thirty pounds. He was as strong as both the other men and had

been allowed to do all the hard work in getting out boat material. So you see we started out with three bosses, I called them Captain, Mister and Gus, and never knew any other names for them.

We packed the boat and started one beautiful Sunday morning and in less than two hours they began to disagree about hoisting the sail. Not one of them knew a thing about it. We had a good back wind until we passed an island. The wind shifted and would have upset the boat had she not been laden within six inches of the water's edge, which steadied us until the sail could be hauled down. To say the least we had a narrow escape.

Camping early the boys wanted to do some prospecting and wanted to begin at the "beginning." After pitching the tents, mine was six by eight, they started off in different directions. They were one party who were not going to divide with each other as so many agreed to do. They were no more than out of sight when I saw a commotion at a nearby tent and to my amazement I beheld a woman. Over I went, post haste, an Indian had just brought in a quarter of mountain sheep. I begged to be allowed to buy a piece of it, at twenty-five cents a pound. I could only get two pounds. The aforesaid woman proved to be a school teacher of whom you will hear more anon. I hurried back to cook the meat and give the boys a good supper, to try to heal the breach between them, well knowing if you have a good hold on a man's stomach his heart counts for little. When they returned tired and hungry, their joy knew no bounds as they sniffed the odor of fresh meat frying, it was an easy matter to conciliate them; they buried the hatchet for the time being at least and laughed and chatted over their sumptuous meal. We came next to Cariboo Crossing, where the meek-eyed woodland reindeer passes over in large numbers in their migrations to different feeding grounds and where we were stranded on a sand bar for eighteen hours.

A stream connects lake Bennett with lake Tagish, that beautiful, clear and blue expanse of rippling water, guarded by lofty and boldly outlined peaks on both sides. We hugged the left hand shore of lake Tagish for about twenty miles when we came to a river five miles long; on the way we passed a large Indian Council house, an Indian village and a burial ground belonging to the



NEARING LITTLE SALMON.

Stick tride. We passed great masses of wild roses that grew in riotous confusion, brightening up the dreary landscape with their flaming colors like a sunbeam athwart a murky sky. Wild onions which abound in that region in great profusion, proved most palatable after our diet of dry food for over three months. We emerged into lake Marsh and still followed the left bank for twentyfive miles. Here we encountered that curse and scourge of the far North, the flies, great big black ones, that inflict a bite equal to a bee sting, in less than an hour their victims looked like small-pox patients. The mosquitos, too, buzzed with a lazy droning sound; when it got too cold for the flies and mosquitos to get in their work a beastly little gray gnat went at us with a pertanacity deserving a better cause; they seemed to breed in the moss and only a strong wind would give us any relief, though we wore netting on our hats and used all kinds of salves and oils recommended for the purpose. On all sides we were informed that they were worse higher up, and so we found them. They are said to have killed bears. Mr. Bruin would fight until completely exhausted. Now we had something else to think about. Out of lake Marsh and twenty miles farther down we approached a wall of mountains. Two or three hundred feet suddenly tapers to a space of less than fifty feet; this is the treacherous and dreaded Miles Canon in which so many people have been drowned, it is less than a mile long, about half way down the channel it widens into short curved bays on each side, where rushing waters spread out with terrific suction toward the sides and when it narrows again the water plunges into the jaws with seething, foaming violence. A glimpse of it convinced me a live coward was preferable to a dead heroine, so I walked and the boys with the Pilot, whom we hired for twenty-five dollars, shot into the yawning chasm and in less than three minutes were safely through. Our Pilot thought it best to take only one man through White Horse Rapids, three miles below and the boys all wanted to be that man. Gus thought he was the strongest and ought to have the honor, Mister said a light man with a business head would do better, but when we tied up and took a look at the half mile of rapids neither would undertake it, it looked as though we would have to hire

another Pilot. Finally the Captain decided to go. After roping our sail and oil cloth tarpaulin around the boat they started. In about a minute the boat struck the edge of a rock completely turning it around, then standing it on end, the waters piled up the spray in white columns ten or twelve feet high. There is a fall of several feet at that point, and the men were well splashed and drenched to the skin. While we were yet watching the awful grandeur, a scow was dashed to pieces and three men drowned. Almost everybody run the rapids, and almost every day one or more were drowned; some lined their boats from the shore, but few were ever seen again. We thought the worst of our journey was now over, but it did not so prove to be. On nearing little Salmon, we saw an island where great quantities of driftwood had collected; to the left was a wide swift channel and to the right a peaceful looking passage. The little man wanted to go to the right, so he quit his oar and the Dutchman's powerful stroke sent our boat on the driftwood, with her side snagged, she began to leak, but we were so well packed it took some minutes to fill the boat with water; they were still quarreling and did not seem to realize our danger. I had not said a word, but now something must be done. I looked about, and catching sight of a sandbar, I pleaded with them to pull for it for my sake; they dropped their heads and worked for dear life and just reached it as the boat went under water. Out they jumped and held the boat a passing scow sent a Frenchman in a peterboro (a cloth boat), he could not speak a word of English and by signs I told him I would sink the boat. He understood, and in French told me to get in the middle of the boat. It was a very short distance, but the water was deep. He put me ashore without match, ax or even a knife and my skirts were wet and freezing. There was ice and snow to the right of us, and snow and ice to the left of us, and I was anything but comfortable.

I walked up and down the shore, calling at the top of my voice, but the channel was at least a quarter of a mile away, and it was a long time before I attracted attention of anyone who could lend assistance; after fully an hour, a boat with ropes and willing hands came to our rescue, and in a short time we were



**JUSTIFIED HESITATION.**



making our camp, though we had lost the perishable part of our outfits. After a week's delay, which was spent in repairing our boat, we began our onward march.

We passed some magnificent scenery in this far Northland where the snow and the sea and the mountains meet. The glacial mountains were most royal in their robes of purple and silver. At times the sky was filled with filmy clouds of crimson and saffron which were faintly reflected in the waters of the lake. Little rocky islands drowsed in the mist like some fantastic monster reposing on the bosom of the water. We felt as though we were nearing our destination when we struck the Yukon, until lately an almost unknown river. The Yukon is now conceded to be the largest river in the world; it is twenty miles wide, seven hundred miles from its mouth and is navigable for twenty-three hundred miles. It discharges one-third more water than the Mississippi and has more gold in its basin than any other river in the world.

Five Finger Rapids is terrific in its grandeur; four immense rocks rear their granite-like sides in the center where they look like some old feudal castle; at their base the waters seethe and boil like the witch's cauldron and the foam-tossed waves dash high against the rocks where they break and scatter in myriads of feathery spray as white and filmy and cloud-like as the veil of a bride. After encountering dangers innumerable, after shooting death haunted rapids and climbing steeply seemingly inaccessible, after travelling miles and miles on the rough pack trail we caught a magnificent glimpse of Slide Mountain.

#### SLIDE MOUNTAIN.

"Hist man! bend low your head,  
And still your breath—  
Is that the howl of wolves?  
Is it the wail of death?

And what are the shadows gray?  
And lean and hungry and lank,  
That swarm from the mountain's side,  
To howl on the river's bank?

Between those wind-swept pines,  
 In their armour of ice bent low,  
 There's a million swaying forms,  
 Yet never a track in the snow.

Look at their lolling tongues,  
 And blood-shot eyes aglare:  
 At their cruel, wolf-like fangs  
 And matted wind-blown hair.

Mark how each thing of life  
 Shudders and hurries on;  
 For there are the Phantom dogs  
 Who shadow the great Yukon.

The story as told to me  
 By Isaac, Chief of the band,  
 Was of a battle fought  
 Here on disputed land.

From down the river there came  
 A tribe in their warlike array,  
 To kill the "Great Spirit's" men,  
 And take all their land away.

Bravely they fought for days,  
 But their numbers being small,  
 Their enemy won the day,  
 And made of them prisoners, all.

And bound them, ready to burn,  
 There at the foot of the hill:  
 But, being the chosen of God,  
 The Great Spirit had His will.

And so in the dead of night,  
 When the wicked tribe was asleep,  
 The mountain above came down  
 And buried them ocean deep.

Then up through the falling earth,  
 Like smoke-wreaths bravely tossed,  
 Came the Great Spirit's chosen men,  
 But their women and dogs were lost.

And that is why to this day,  
 Along each snow-packed trail,  
 The sound of the Malamute  
 Has the sound of a woman's wail."

By daylight we soon learned that Dawson City was composed of hastily erected log cabins and tents. The main building, of course, was the government office where claims were recorded, next in interest was the post office, which was the center of attraction when the mail came in from the States; the mail was a decidedly uncertain commodity; often it would be four months before we could hear from the outside world. Newspapers sold for a dollar each; any kind of literature was devoured with avidity. Fabulous prices were paid for books; some one finally conceived the idea of a public reading, and in that way all could get the benefit of newspapers at a nominal cost. The rough miners would gather about the reader and listen with eyes, ears and mouth wide open for fear a stray bit of information might escape. The learned lawyer from the east with the unschooled shoemaker of the west each equally anxious to hear from home. I paid three dollars for the privilege of reading David Harum some time later. The Canadian mounted police was the only police protection. It was for the most part composed of the scions of rich men who were sent to the far north to settle down. They had sown enough wild oats, I doubt not, to reap a most bountiful harvest of tares. But at any rate it was considered a great honor to become a member of the mounted police, and they did well as regards their official duties.

In this part of Alaska there are really only two seasons, summer and winter, the short summer extending from about the middle of June to the middle of September, is part of the time intensely hot, unrelieved by the long nights of the temperate zone; and



A KLONDIKE CABIN.

the winter with its long night and strangely long twilight is not so unbearable as many suppose if one is provided against its severity and is content to lead an indoor life. In mid-winter we see very little of the sun and keep lights burning almost twenty-four hours. In summer the longest day the sun is only obscured about half an hour, and that is diffuse twilight.

The mean summer temperature the interior is between 60 and 70 degrees. It is away up there close to the arctic circle, where Nature generously unlocks her bountiful store-house of inexhaustible riches, and spreads forth in colorings as rich and warm as the gems that bejewel the diadem of a mighty monarch, a magnificent pageant on the canopy overhead at summer midnight. For Alaska, as well as her sister country, Norway, is the land of the midnight sun. Imagine midnight without darkness, without stars. Instead the blue dome overhead is flushing as red as the damask cheek of a school girl; away in the north the tireless sun is skirting the horizon like a victorious monarch in a chariot of fire. The snow capped peaks in the distance catch the infection and glow with a warm deep violet tint. The water, too, smiles up into the canopy above and is turned to a mass of quivering, shifting color. The tints change as rapidly as the shades of a kaleidoscope from flaming scarlet to tawny orange, from pink as delicate in shading as the petal of a wild rose to a pale mauve as dainty as the inner tint of a lilac blossom and then back again to the flaming reds and royal purples. The moon, poor ghost of herself, shrinks away in the south as though frightened at the glory of the coming of the king. But most gloriously does Diana retaliate in the long winter nights where she reigns on her royal throne unmolested by the orb of day save as he skulks along the horizon for a very short time, she shines in all her magnificence and diffuses from the cold blue dome above her most brilliant radiance for it is only away up where the land lies close to the Arctic circle that Diana really shines in all her effulgence, however, as we were "out for gold instead of daisies," I will proceed to descend from the ideal to the real. We were all extremely anxious to stake our claims, so with early dawn of the morning after our arrival, I hied me to the creek, it was about a mile to the scene of



PROSPECTIVE MILLIONAIRES.

activity, but on and on I trudged, mud over shoe top every step I took for twenty-four miles, and found to my deep chagrin and disappointment every creek claim was taken. I staked a claim on the mountain side on Victoria Gulch, but if it ever panned out any gold I never heard of it. For the first time in my life I saw the miners at work, it is an immense satisfaction to watch the gold washed out, to see it appear bright and shining in the black sand in the bottom of the pan; the ground is frozen as far down as bed-rock; a thick heavy moss on top of the glacial mud prevents the warm rays of the twenty-four hour sun from thawing the top of the ground even in summer. This "muck" is about two-thirds water and one-third sediment. When thawed by burning, which was not an overly satisfactory way, many pick or blast it off, the burning was done in winter, making fires on the surface, thawing the ground at the rate of about an inch an hour until the pay-streak or bed-rock was reached. The pay-dirt was brought to the surface and heaped in a pile until spring when water could be obtained. The process of sluicing was then employed. Planks were procured and formed into a box of suitable width and depth. Slats are placed across the bottom of the box at intervals, called riffles, or shallow holes were bored in the bottom in such order that no particle could escape. Several of these boxes were set up with a considerable slope and were fitted into one another at the ends like stove-pipe, a stream of water was now directed into the upper end of the highest box. The gravel which is pulverized magnetic iron ore having been collected, it is shoveled into the upper box and is washed downward by the strong current of water. The gold is detained by its weight and is held by the slats or in the holes mentioned. If it was fine, mercury was placed behind the slats or in the holes to catch it. The "clean-up" took place once a year. Now they use thawers, and with improved machinery work the year round. Where the gold in the Yukon Valley comes from is a mystery. Geologists claim it was carried there by huge glaciers. If this idea is correct, the gold now being dug must have come from some fabulously rich mother lode by the attrition of the ice. On this trip right early one morning I saw a man come out of his cabin with about twenty dogs, dogs were

then worth from one to three hundred dollars each. I said: "Good morning, I would not think so many dogs would be healthy," thinking more about the wealth of his dogs than his own health. He looked at them fondly, and sticking both hands in his pockets, he replied, "Oh, I don't know, there never has been any of them sick yet." The little school teacher whom we met as we started on out journey, followed up this same Bonanza Creek a month later and staked a claim from which she realized seven thousand dollars in less than three months, and was wise enough to go outside, and as I sit here writing, to my right is an invitation to her wedding.

After watching some of the miners "clean up" I trudged back to Dawson City, worn out with my long tramp.

Of my three companions all were sure they were going to make a stake. The captain boasted of his immense aptitude for work and declared he would take a lay (a sort of working on shares) and make his fortune. The red-headed one said he had read all about the country and mining and was positive he would succeed. Gus was equally sure of success because he had a friend who had struck it rich and would put him "next" to all the information that was necessary. Well, Gus, poor fellow, found that friendship was a hollow mockery, for his aforesaid prosperous friend refused to cultivate him, in fact, threw him over *in toto*, so the poor fellow, discouraged, disheartened and disgusted took the first boat back to the States and closely following on his heels went the red-headed man who learned to his sorrow that an ounce of experience was worth a cart load of information. The Captain was taken sick and after remaining in Dawson City against his will for a month, left in a homemade boat for the States, vowing he would never visit that God-forsaken country again. The thought of returning never occurred to me. I began looking about for employment. I went to the government office to see if I could get writing to do, and was offered a desk at forty-five dollars a month and board. I scorned the offer, for I could get fifteen dollars a day for washing dishes. I told a young American woman of the position and she cleared a fortune through information she obtained in the office. Then I thought of a school, but there



were only two children in the camp, being well posted in current events, I proposed a school for miners, but the ring-leader, an old fellow with more money than brains informed me, as he expectorated savagely, he reckoned he knew enough if a fellow had money he'd get along all right in this world without schoolin'. I had met with success in the States as an elocutionist, I next tried giving a recital. The best local newspaper office printed my tickets, which were to sell for five dollars each. Major Welch had sent forth a proclamation closing all saloons on Sunday, and advised me to secure Pioneer Hall, where church services were held. The minister, however, balked, and refused to let me have the hall, the only possible auditorium we could use in the place, so I was compelled to give it on a week day night. I had gathered together a quartette of miners with voices that harmonized and blended to perfection. I never heard in the States any finer music than that rendered by those four roughly clad miners. The crowd in attendance was so small we shortened our program and returned the admission fee. At the close of the concert a young Irish girl came up to shake hands with me, and I found three shining gold pieces in the palm of my hand, I told her she had lost some money, but she assured me with a pleasant smile that that was a way they had of welcoming women to Dawson City. This same girl amassed a fortune in mines and married a French count, exchanging her wealth, as so many American girls do, for a title. The narrow-minded minister who refused to allow me the use of the hall afterwards invited me to help him conduct a series of entertainments, which invitation I flatly refused.

I found a bag of gold dust in the mud on the main street. I carried it to a nearby restaurant and gave it to the proprietor to advertise. The owner of the property proved to be one of the dance-hall girls. As I was about to leave the restaurant I overheard a woman inquiring of the proprietor's wife for a dressmaker. Now, I had never plied a needle in my life nor run a sewing machine, but I happened to board with a woman who did, so I eagerly offered to take the work home. The material proved to be a Japanese silk of the slaziest, cheapest quality, and of a most gorgeous



A CACHE.

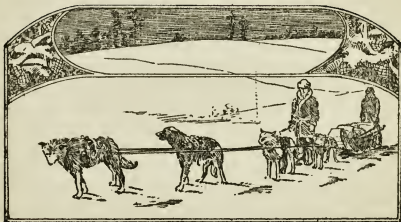
hue. The trimming was of wide cotton lace of the pillow case variety. We made the garment with black cotton thread as it was all we could get, and charged her twenty-five dollars for our work. We learned afterwards our prices were exceedingly low, an Indian woman paid three hundred dollars to have a skirt made, and three and four hundred dollars was considered a very moderate price for the work of making a suit. After I gained some knowledge of prices I sold a silk grenadine dress I had worn for six years for three hundred and fifty dollars. I paid, however, eight dollars a yard for a poor quality of denim for a skirt. We grew discouraged after losing fifty dollars on a woman who committed suicide in a frenzy of jealousy of one of the miners. We found a letter from her father in her pocket and it breathed perfect confidence in his little girl whom he soon expected to join. "Where ignorance is bliss 'tis folly to be wise" of a truth and it was a merciful thing that the poor old father never knew what sort of a life his little girl was leading away up there in that tough mining camp. Some of our patrons were just such as these and after clearing ninety dollars each upon our dressmaking venture we went out of business. I next turned my attention to the restaurant business as my supply of cash was getting low I traded my watch for a tent in town and felt quite elated over my bargain. The next morning as I went to my place of business I was amazed to find a notice pinned on my door to the effect the building was in the street and would have to be moved or confiscated. I remonstrated with the Crown prosecuting attorney, but to no avail. I was compelled to recall my trade. I was determined not to give up the venture of starting an eating house, so I invested my little remaining capital (over a hundred dollars) in a huge tent, which was originally brought in for a grocery store. I loaded them in a boat and started to look for a location; I hired my boat poled up the Klondike twelve miles for which service I paid twenty dollars. I anchored my boat and started through the forest to find a clearing upon which I could locate. It was night when I started on my journey, the wild forest settled around me; dark green, dripping firs encompassed me like a vast army, damp, heavy moss clung to every leaf and stump. With

*Made money  
for nothing*

a heavy pack on my back I stumbled and sprawled over roots, rocks and logs, plunging into bog-holes, and slopping along into running water almost to my arm-pits. The moon, which is most generous with her light, where nature stints herself with heat, shone round, and bright and full; it cast tremulous shadows in my pathway as its light penetrated the dense forest. The world looked calm and peaceful, bathed in the flood of silver glory and e'en the rough miners' camp, with its scattered, rude, log cabins and white tents, became a thing of beauty under Fair Luna's magic spell. I breathed a sigh of relief as I emerged from the solitary forest and drank in the witchery and beauty of it all as eagerly as the sun-baked earth drinks in the pattering rain-drops. I selected a site for my restaurant about eight miles from where my boat was anchored and close to a fresh spring. I carried all my worldly goods, done up in packs, on my back, making three trips in all. I hailed passing miners to assist me in hoisting my tent for which service I paid seven dollars. I made a bed of hemlock boughs which proved a most refreshing couch. The rain poured down in torrents, it pounded on my tent like hot shot at Chicamauga. I was just dozing off to sleep with the sound of the rain in my ears as loud as the booming of the waves against the surf when a hoarse voice called from the outside, "Say, pard, where's yer door?" steadying my frightened voice, I called back above the rush of the rain, "There are no men here, its only a woman—you'll find shelter about a mile beyond." He was sick, he explained, and it would be impossible to go on such a stormy night, couldn't I afford him shelter? I could not resist a sick person's appeal, and on such a night, so I dressed and sat up the remainder of the night, I gave him a cup of tea and made him some toast for his breakfast, and he asked me what I charged; I told him I knew nothing of prices as yet, so he tendered me ten dollars in gold dust. Miners, as rough as they appear, are the most generous hearted men in the world; they never ask favors of anyone without paying most liberally for all they get. Well, my self-invited guest was my first customer. For my table I bought a plank twelve feet long which cost me forty dollars, both ends rested on tomato boxes. I made a sign which would have appeared

grotesque save that the miners were accustomed to all sorts of devices in that country where ingenuity must take the place of tools; the sign was a piece of dry goods box fifteen inches long by two inches wide; the first four letters were made of carpenter's red pencil, of which I had a limited supply, the next of white chalk of which I had a still more limited supply, and the remainder were made of soot from the stove lid. I tacked the sign to a tree and called my new place of business a "Road House." For cups I used tomato cans, put salt and sugar in paper sacks. By exchanging and buying I managed to secure five forks, five tin plates—no two of them alike—and one knife, but as every man carried a knife I had no difficulty there. I had no kettle in which to cook beans, (a miner never considers a meal complete without them), but hearing of one two miles away I walked and secured the loan of it. For the first meal after I was fully settled I served evaporated potatoes, bread, coffee with sugar,, beans and bacon; my first customer, barring the one who came in the rain was a New Zealander, clad in knickerbockers, after his, what was then considered, a sumptuous repast, he wanted to know what I charged. I told him three dollars and a half. He seemed amazed at my reasonable price and called for my gold scales; I had overlooked them in making my list of purchases, so he called for a newspaper, but bless you, with newspapers at one dollar each, my supply was extremely limited, I emptied the salt sack on the board table, and he left a small heap of shining gold dust which I afterward learned was twelve dollars. Supplies were exceedingly high, potatoes sold at that time at two dollars and a half a pound, though afterwards the market was glutted with them and their price was down to bed-rock. I paid four dollars and a half for a three cent sack of salt,, eggs were eighteen dollars a dozen, beans were fifty cents a pound and the cost of transportation from Dawson City, where I purchased my supplies was tremendous. I paid thirty-five dollars a cord to get my wood cut, business picked up wonderfully and I did remarkably well until the man who owned the bean kettle called for his property. I was at a loss what to do next until I happened to ask a good-natured Swede who said he would lend me a dutch oven if I would

get it. His camp was eight miles away, but I couldn't serve meals without beans, so I went after it. It was a ponderous affair and seemed a tremendous load to carry so far but nevertheless I started with it. A party of miners came along with a burro and seeing me stagger under my heavy burden, loaded it on the poor animal, and was home with it in short order. I dug a hole in the ground, made a bed of coals and left the beans in the dutch oven about thirty-six hours and they were perfectly delicious. A vicious ex-prize fighter caused me considerable trouble. He saw at once what an excellent location I had secured, owing to the clear spring and made negotiations to induce me to sell. He offered to hire me as cook for one hundred dollars a week. He was utterly beside himself when I refused point blank to accept his offer, and he went away cursing roundly and swearing vengeance. He erected a large structure a few rods down the trail, felling trees within ten feet of my tent, when there were much larger and better ones near his own place. I went out to remonstrate with him, saying, "Mr. L——, I know you have the same legal right to these trees I have, but they are handy to me here and I am struggling to get a foothold." He informed me he had \$17,000 in the bank and would cut trees wherever he pleased, whereupon one of his men threw down his ax and exclaimed vehemently as he walked away, "Well, your money wont hire me to do a dirty trick like this." He drove his oxen to my spring, where they wallowed in the water, and commenced a perpetual fire of petty annoyances, until I was compelled to call for police interference. He and his cook became entangled in a shooting affray shortly afterwards and he closed his doors. I never felt more rejoiced in my life than I did when I saw him go trudging past with his paraphernalia and I knew that that pest was removed. I prospered exceedingly, and soon a log cabin took the place of the tent. I hired men to chop the logs and chinked it with moss myself. Flour sacks served every purpose for windows and tarpaulins for doors. I worked twenty-two hours a day at the hardest kind of manual labor. I kept adding cabin after cabin to my hotel until I had a very pretentious affair with five rooms. We used hemlock boughs for beds; the leaf of the hemlock is flat



LOADED WITH GOLD.

and soft and gives forth a balsamic odor, alike pleasant and healthful. I bought a cayuse and saddle for \$150.000, but as hay was six hundred dollars a ton, I sold him soon after for one hundred dollars more than I paid for him. The excitement at Nome broke out at the time when my trade was the most flourishing and I decided to float with the on-coming tide. The only thing of value I possessed at the time was an immense stock of blankets. They were all nearly new and I had paid forty dollars a pair for some of them. I didn't want to sell them at a sacrifice and I couldn't very well carry them, so I left them nailed up in my cabin securely and started.

We reached Nome, that human maelstrom,, at night. We could see from afar the twinkling of the lights and their reflections dancing in the waters of the sea. We proceeded through the main street, and if ever pandemonium raged, it raged there. The streets fairly swarmed with a heterogeneous mass of people. Drunken gamblers grovelled in the dust; women, shameless, scarlet women, clad in garments of velvet, silks, laces, of exceedingly grotesque character but universally decolette, revelled as recklessly as any of their tipsy companions. From the rough dance halls the scraping of a discordant fiddle rose above the noisy clattering of heavy boots that sounded like a chariot race in an empty garret. Dust settled around about us like a heavy fog. We waded through rivers of it before we reached our hotel. There were thirty thousand inhabitants in Nome at that time of non-descript character. Cultured, intelligent men hobnobbed with the uncultured and ignorant. The one touch of nature that made them all akin was the greed for gold. My first purchase was a lot on front street and a small dilapidated shack, for which I paid one thousand dollars. I learned to my dismay that it was so close to the harbor a heavy sea was liable at any time to wash me away, so I put up a sign for sale or rent. A Scotchman, who was looking for a place to locate a grocery store, caught sight of the sign and snapped at the chance of getting such a good location for so little money (\$1100). He moved in at once with a stock of groceries. Shortly after a terrific storm broke out in Nome. The heavens opened their flood gates and the rain descended in



torrents; the wind blew a gale, it whistled like demons let loose from Hades, it churned the sea into a raging mass of angry fury, the foam-flecked waves tossed their heads high and seemed to dance in glee as they joined in the hideous laughter of the wind over the sad havoc it had wrought, for one hundred precious lives were snuffed out that night. The poor Scotchman's house stood upon the sands and the waves washed his all away.

My next investment was a pump engine and boiler for washing gold on the beach, for which I paid twenty-five hundred dollars. I hired men to set it up at a big expense, and we were just ready to start working when an edict issued by a rascally politician forbidding work on the beach stopped proceedings. The aforesaid rascal, through influential friends in Washington, D. C., lobbied a bill through to get the land open for settlement; no one else being aware of such a bill, the underhanded scamp sent men of his own choosing to stake claims of twenty acres each, he taking half the shares. Heretofore the beach had been open to all, sixty feet back, the militia was there to enforce orders and they swooped down on the poor miners like hawks on their prey and carried them to prison where some of them may languish yet for aught I know, and all because a bloated bond-holder wanted to line his pockets at the poor miners' expense. My machinery was soon buried in the sand and discouraged and disheartened I returned to Dawson. On Eighty Gulch I purchased two perfect specimens of mastodon teeth which were petrified intact, and weighed thirty-two pounds. Scientists say the animal must have weighed over thirty thousand pounds.

After a lecture which I delivered in the states when I exhibited these specimens and said the mastodon had become extinct, an old fellow slouched up to the platform and informed me as he shook his head wisely that they were whales teeth; his brother had been a sailor and had told him about the whales' immense jaw. Now, the truth is, a whale's teeth are more like fins, and from them we get all our whalebone. When I returned to my Road House I found My cabins had been ransacked and all my blankets stolen. One afternoon when I went to visit one of my respectable neighbors I saw some blankets that looked suspiciously

like mine. I made a pretext of examining them and found the blind mark I had placed on all my blankets before I left. She had deliberately stolen every one of them, but gave them up without much protest. When I first went into Dawson ninety per cent of the miners were Americans, but later the Canadians came in and as they were willing to work for extremely small pay prices took a decided fall. A distinguished lord from England came to Alaska on business pertaining to the law. He was decidedly an impractical man and his unbusiness-like ways were a source of amusement to the miners. For instance, he brought hay and oats all the way from England for his seven horses when he could have bought in the states for one-half what it cost there. Of all the aggravations I had to put up with in my strenuous life in Alaska the servants were the worst. I wanted a cook, so I tacked up a sign to that effect on one of my trees. The first candidate was a capable looking woman of forty or so. I stated what her work would be and offered her a dollar an hour. I cautioned her especially as I went to rest awhile to keep the stove red hot as the people were likely to come any time for their meals and time was money to them. She acquiesced willingly and I went to take the first rest I had had in many a day. I heard the door open presently and several miners came in but I heard no stir in the kitchen. I dragged myself to the cook's domain and found the fire out and the cook vanished. She returned just as I started to build the fire and said she "plumb" forgot about my instructions. I controlled my temper and bade her build the fire; the idiotic creature threw in a five pound can of lard to feed the fire and lard at one dollar and a half a pound and hard to get at that. I managed to grasp it before much damage was done and discharged her then and there. Fortunately I had some venison at hand and it was only a short time before it was set smoking hot before the hungry miners. I hung out my sign again and my next applicant was a Dane, a bright looking young fellow, and when he emerged from the pantry in a spotless white apron and cap, my joy knew no bounds; here, at last, was a treasure, but alas! for my high hopes; he knew as little about cooking as a fluffy kitten about philosophy and I was compelled to discharge him, so out

went my sign again. Next candidate was an Englishman, who said he had been steward on a boat and showed me credentials enough to pave the way from Dan to Beersheba. I had no other alternative but to hire him. I gave him instructions and he seemed polite and willing. One thing I impressed on his mind was that the kitchen was to be scrubbed Wednesday and Saturday mornings. Well, he seemed to be just the one and we got on swimmingly for three days. He was as neat as a pin and a good cook withal, but Wednesday morning I remonstrated with him for not scrubbing before dinner, because it was so late, he turned on me savagely, "Now, see here, I don't allow no missus to interfere with my work and you can just get out of the kitchen." I informed him with quite as much spirit that I was to be boss in my own house and he could go. I offered to pay him what was due him (a dollar an hour for three days) but he said he'd have a month's pay or nothing, and went away saying he'd have the law on me. I went into a millinery store in Dawson sometime later and he followed me and demanded his month's salary. After I left he came in again and asked for me; the milliner was a witty little body and decided to have a little fun at the irate Englishman's expense. "Now, see here," she said confidentially, as she stepped up to him, "there's no use of your running after that woman. I know she wouldn't have you and you're wasting your time, so I advise you to carry your ducks to another market." The fellow walked off highly indignant and I never heard of him after that. From thenceforth I got along without help. One bitterly cold night I heard a commotion out in front and upon investigating found a heavily laden sled in a rut in the road and the owner, as he emitted oath after oath, was belaboring his poor dogs unmercifully. He ceased swearing as he caught sight of me, but continued beating his faithful team. I controlled my indignation as best I could and instead of railing against him, I assured him of my sympathy in his trouble and invited him and his dogs in to partake of a warm supper; he dropped his whip in an instant, and after a little urging, unhitched his tired dogs and came in. How those dogs ate, the poor, lean, lank, hungry looking things. I don't believe they had had a thing to eat for days. The poor Siwash dog has my heart-

felt sympathy; he is the most abused animal that comes under a lash. The white man's cruel treatment of the native dog is enough to make an Indian's blood boil; they use chains to beat the poor things with and many a dog has had ribs and legs broken and eyes knocked out. They are animals of the greatest endurance and can subsist for ten days without eating anything but snow. Well, those got a good, square meal for once, the man insisted on paying me for my trouble, but I refused any compensation. He often stopped afterwards and I never had cause to complain of his treatment of his dogs. They were slick and fat-looking and were never abused, at least, in my presence.

"Old-timers" or "Sour doughs" were marked usually by coats of deer skin, or the more typical "Parka" of striped or navy blue twill trimmed with fur.

This "Parka" compasses the body of the wearer without any opening in front or back, it has sleeves and an enormous hood. His or her head is thrust through the aperture left for it in this hood.

A "Chechako" is a new person in the camp.

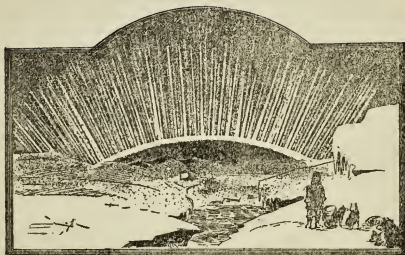
"Mukluks" are mud mocassins; the soles are made waterproof with seal oil.

A "Malamute" is a native dog. A "Cache" is where one stores their provisions.

The miners are invariably honest. I only lost about seventy dollars though I did considerable credit business. One poor young fellow came staggering into my hotel one night and I can never forget the incident, he was just in the first flush of young manhood, not more than one and twenty. He looked pale and sick, he was evidently of good family and unused to manual labor. When he went to settle his bill I noticed he took the last dust out of his sack, I asked him if that was all he had and he nodded his head, and added, as he turned wearily to get his hat, if it hadn't been I would have stayed here all night, for I don't feel able to go on. I returned his money and insisted upon his remaining, assuring him he could pay me when he made his stake. I doctored him up as best I could, and the next morning he seemed much better, as he went to leave he proffered me a diamond scarf pin, the gift of his mother,

as security for what he owed, but I refused to take it. A week later the poor fellow's dead body was brought back there, the exposure to the elements was too much for one in his weakened condition, thus closed the short chapter of a life just begun. The soft snow wraps its white mantle around thousands of just such as he. The mountain passes are strewn with the bodies of men who, in their vigorous young manhood, came to the New Eldorado filled with high hopes and ambitious dreams of the fabulous riches they would wrest from the base of the stern white capped mountains, giant custodians of the precious metal hid in its bosom only to meet death in the treacherous valleys. I watched beside the bed of one poor young fellow who was stricken with typhoid fever, for days he tossed feverishly on his rude bed between life and death. The battle was unequal and his strength was fast ebbing; he knew he wasn't long for this world and he pleaded with tears in his eyes for a Christian burial. He asked me to preach his funeral sermon. I assured him with a lightness I did not feel that I would help him get well and preach to him afterward, but the poor boy died despite our tender care. We wrapped one of his new blankets about him and out there in the cold and the snow with a few loyal miners grouped about I preached my first funeral sermon. We laid him to rest on the mountain side, where only a rude slab marks his last resting place, and where the wind moaning thro' the lonely fir trees chants his sad requiem.

I became tired of the rough, half-civilized life of a miner's camp and felt no regret as I left my ice bound cabin and turned my face toward the States. However, I felt richly repaid for my daring journey. One of the prettiest sights in Alaska, when all things are portentous, is the northern lights, a soft and luminous atmosphere foretells the appearance of the Aurora Borealis, a wide arc of haze first appears against the intense blue background, an arc through which the stars are plainly visible. The bright, hazy mass becomes tremulous, it moves upward toward the zenith in undulating waves, arc after arc appears at intervals constantly changing from a cold white to a pale blue, from a delicate pink to a pale violet, and then a sudden blending of all the colors. Back of the swaying mass of color, a pale pink column suddenly darts



THE NORTHERN LIGHT.

upward like a tongue of flame ; it subsides and another and another takes its place until the heavens have become a mass of shifting, quivering, changing color fringed with a magnificent crimson border. Suddenly the entire dome is a fiery red mass as if the whole world were on fire and the heavens were reflecting the conflagration. In a short time the magnificent panorama has receded and left us again. Conditions today are entirely different from what they were when the gold fever first broke out. The rough pack trails are almost entirely obliterated ; steel rails now wind their shining strands up the tortuous mountain passes and down steep declivities and the snorting engine ploughs its way through the snow-heaped hills and wind-swept valleys. Prices are quite similar to what they are in States and work is difficult to get. I want to sound a note of warning to young men and women who are anxious to make a fortune in the New Eldorado, **STAY RIGHT WHERE YOU ARE**, dig your fortunes out of the rich soil of the smiling prairies of the West, it is absolutely sure, even though a longer path to Dame Fortune's favor than the pick and shovel route and there are no hazardous journeys and mayhap heart-breaking disappointments in the end. Here's to the miners of Alaska, a most whole-souled, generous lot of men who, notwithstanding their rough garb, have hearts that ring as true as the precious metal they wrest from the base of the snow-clad mountains and the basin of the frozen streams.







